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ABSTRACT

The practicum addressed the problem of lack of parent involvement in the development of IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) for their handicapped children, through development of a slide program and associated materials. The program attempted to educate parents regarding the IEP process, their role in it according to Public Law 94-142 (The Education for All Handicapped Children Act), and methods for best executing that role. The slide program and accompanying take-home workbooks were developed and presented to six child advocacy groups. A sample of 11 parents was drawn from volunteers attending the presentations and was followed by the investigator throughout a 5-month period of IEP development. Results indicated that all 11 parents increased their knowledge of PL 94-142, the IEP process, and their role in that process; and all successfully applied their new knowledge and advocacy skills during IEP development. Nine of the parents also reported increased feelings of satisfaction with their schools with no parents contemplating the initiation of due process actions. All the parents felt the slide presentation and workbook helped them to understand the special education process considerably better. (Author/DB)

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A TRAINING PROGRAM THROUGH SLIDES TO FACILITATE PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE IEP

by

Bethanie Gorny

Cluster 21

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1988

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Bethanie Gorny under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

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I wish to thank all the members of the local Association for the Learning Disabled who so graciously consented to be "actors" in the slides and especially Ronee Groff, the president of the organization, who supported the project from its inception, appeared in the slides as the main character, acted as the practicum verifier, and has become a promoter of the project's dissemination.

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ABSTRACT

The Development and Implementation of a Training Program Through Slides to Facilitate Parent Involvement in the IEP. Gorny, Bethanie, 1988: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.
Descriptors: Education for All Handicapped Children Act/ Special Education/Parent School Relationship/Parent Participation/Parent Role/Compliance/Individualized Education Programs/Due Process/Parent Education/Parent Rights/Parent Attitudes/Administrator Attitudes/Child Advocacy

This practicum was designed to address the problem of lack of parent involvement in the development of IEPs for their handicapped children. Although required by law, parent participation in IEP development has been lacking in quality and has been unsatisfactory for many parents according to the literature. The writer's goals were to educate parents regarding the IEP process, their role in it, according to PL 94-142, and how they can best execute that role to achieve beneficial results for their children. A secondary goal was to increase the level of parental satisfaction with their schools and, concomitantly, decrease alienation and due process cases.

The writer developed a slide presentation on parent involvement in the IEP process with accompanying take home workbooks and presented it to six child advocacy groups. A sample of eleven parents was drawn from volunteers who attended the presentations. Each sample member completed a case history form developed by the writer and was then followed throughout a five month period during his or her IEP development. Contact was maintained by phone and, at the conclusion of their IEP process, a questionnaire designed by the writer was administered. The data obtained during the phone conversations and via the questionnaire was analyzed to determine if the goals of the practicum were realized.

The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that all eleven parents increased their knowledge of PL 94-142 and the IEP process, their understanding of their role in that process, and all successfully applied their new knowledge and advocacy skills during IEP development. Nine of the parents reported increased feelings of satisfaction with their schools and none were contemplating initiating due process actions. All parents concurred that the slide presentation and workbook helped them to understand the special education process considerably better, and felt strongly that schools needed to do more to educate parents of children with special needs about their rights.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Setting

The setting for the practicum was a county chapter of a national advocacy group for the learning disabled. The parent organization is a national non-profit group founded in 1960 by parents and professionals to encourage, develop, and establish programs for children and adults with learning disabilities.

The structure of the organization is composed of state affiliates in every state in the United States. Within each state there are smaller county units called chapters with some 800 chapters presently operating across the country. The officers of the county chapters and the state level associations are designated the Executive Committee, are elected from the general membership for two year terms, and are composed of a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. There may be as many three vice presidents depending on needs of the particular chapter. A Board of Trustees, appointed by the Executive Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the executive committee and votes on

the budget. Each chapter must abide by the policies and regulations established by the national organization in order to retain chapter recognition. In addition, each establishes by-laws which it adapts from the national model to suit its particular context.

The membership of the chapter selected for this practicum setting consisted of approximately 100 members, the majority of whom were white, middle class parents of learning disabled children. Approximately 20% of the membership was drawn from the education profession.

The population of the county is 207,700 and four fifths of the people live within a fifteen mile radius of the major city in the area. The remainder of the population is situated inland in very rural areas and along the coastline in numerous seashore communities. The primary sources of income are related to tourism or farming. According to the 1980 census, 12% of the population is the recipient of welfare and poverty is evident in many of the small rural towns and in the slums of the major city. It is a county where the differential between the very wealthy and the very poor is quite pronounced. The racial and ethnic makeup of the area is comprised of 79.5% Caucasian, 17.7% blacks, 8% Hispanics, and 2% other.

Not all chapters provide the same services to their members and this is determined individually according to the needs and desires expressed by the membership. Fundraising also varies from group to group. This particular chapter

raised substantial sums of money through its weekly bingo game and lesser amounts from membership fees. The services provided by this group included maintenance of a telephone hotline, a speakers bureau, a qualified tutor list, a two week summer day camp experience, distribution of parent information packets, and a series of workshops, lectures, and other programs presented to promote awareness and knowledge of learning disabilities. The group also provided advocacy assistance through the hot line and in person, if needed.

The Writer's Role and Responsibilities

The writer serves as a board member of the group and in that role advises the officers in all areas of operation. She has also assumed responsibility for planning and implementing a number of the informational programs presented to the public and members. These volunteer efforts have included assembling a panel of professionals from areas other than education to speak and answer questions about learning disabilities, presenting an adult dyslexic college student to speak about his experiences, and arranging for the Office of Administrative Law to show a film and discuss due process in special education.

Another responsibility the writer has handled for the organization for the past five years is that of provision of advocacy assistance for parents who are members. She has

assisted parents with their child's Individualized Education Plan development, preparation for meetings with school officials, problems with placement and classification.

The manner in which this is usually handled is through a meeting with the parents during which they are offered advice about how to serve their child's best interests based on the interview with the parent, perusal of the records the parent can supply, as well as any evaluations or test scores the parent has access to. A written list of suggestions on what to ask and what to secure in the IEP is given to the parents to help them use the special education laws effectively. A parent information packet is also provided at this time. The parents are encouraged to tell school officials they have received advocacy assistance from the organization.

The writer's qualifications for this role are a B.A. in elementary education and an M.A. in learning disabilities. She also holds state certifications as teacher of the handicapped, learning disabilities consultant, speech correctionist, and elementary education teacher.

For the past six years, the writer has been employed by Project Head Start as its speech and learning disabilities consultant and for the past two years has worked as the learning disabilities consultant for the local community college. Prior to these positions, she served as a speech correctionist in schools and clinics, a learning disabilities consultant and child study team member, a child

study team chairperson, and has done private tutoring of both children and adults with learning disabilities. She has accumulated a total of twenty years of experience in special education. These experiences have provided her with a good working knowledge of the laws related to special education, and a great deal of familiarity with and insight into handicapped children and their parents. Another factor which makes it easier for her to function as an advocate than might be possible for other professionals is that she is not affiliated with any school district and can assist parents from an unbiased position without fear of repercussions that might affect her employment.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Description of the Problem Situation

The problem addressed in this practicum was that parents of handicapped children were not involved as full participants in the IEP process as required by P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Since the passage of the law in 1975 there have been problems with the enforcement and implementation of various portions of the law, but noncompliance with the parent participation requirements in particular, has received a lot of attention from advocacy groups and the government. Through monitoring efforts and congressional hearings on the matter, it has become clear that limited parent participation in the IEP process is a widespread problem (United States Senate,1980; Association for the Learning Disabled,[ACLD],1987).

According to the law, parents have the right to be notified in writing of any referral made to special education and to receive written information in the native language of the parents regarding their right to due process. From that point on, the parents have the right to be involved

in the decisions made regarding the need for evaluations, the child's educational classification, placement, and program. The parents have the right to disagree with the school at any point in the IEP process and to have their position heard by a series of mediators beginning with the principal proceeding to the county level and the state level if necessary.

The National Information Center for the Handicapped Children and Youth [NICHCY] (1987) asserted that parental participation in decision making is one of the most important and pervasive features of P.L.94-142. It is actually a legislative strategy to insure equal education opportunities for handicapped children and is a direct outcome of past failures of local school systems to provide equal education. This rationale is stated by Congress within the Act itself.

A substantial amount of dissatisfaction and lack of knowledge on the part of the parents existed regarding their participation in the IEP process. The dissatisfaction decreased the effectiveness of the parent/school relationship. Many parents who attended meetings and presentations sponsored by the advocacy organization used as the setting for this practicum, voiced dissatisfaction with their schools' reactions to their attempts to advocate for their children. They did not feel that they were valued as participants in the IEP process and resented the lack of information provided to them about their

rights. Anger, frustration, distrust, and an adversarial approach to the school, were the most frequent feelings expressed by the members of the organization and members of the public who attended the meetings.

It was apparent from the nature of the questions asked at these meetings and the calls received via the organization's hot line, that the primary concern of the parents was their lack of participation in the IEP process which they attributed to the failure of the schools to advise them of their rights.

It was also clear from the feedback received at meetings that the members believed that their children and others were frequently being misplaced, misclassified, and denied services they were entitled to under the law. In addition, the professionals who were members of the group, did not deny the validity of these assertions and stated publicly that many problems and inequities associated with the implementation of the law existed.

When talking to members it was evident that the reasons for joining the organization were, most frequently, a desire to advocate for those parents who were being denied their rights or a personal desire to be able to be a more effective advocate for one's own child.

Some efforts were being made to rectify this situation on the part of the county office and the organization in cooperation with each other. The Director of Special Services admitted that no school was required to educate parents and agreed to ask each school to give the parent

an information packet prepared by the advocacy group when a referral for evaluations was made. The distribution was not required and therefore was not monitored so it was impossible to know if it was actually done. The organization received some requests for more parent packets indicating that a small number of schools were cooperating. To date, few parents who have approached the organization for assistance have indicated that they were given the information packets.

Another effort to involve parents in special education was the formation of Parent Advisory Councils to the schools. Appointed representatives of parents who had children in special education were supposed to serve as members of the council. Two problems existed concerning this effort. First, it did not filter down to the individual parent in any formalized manner designed to get them involved in the IEP process. Second, the council was not monitored by the county so that operations were left up to the district. One parent on such a board reported that meetings were never held and all the other representatives on the council worked for the school in some capacity creating an obvious conflict of interest.

In an ideal situation every parent who received notification of a referral to special education would be educated enough to participate in the process in an informed, knowledgeable, and effective manner. Parents would feel their input was welcome and desired. They would

feel that they were equal partners in their child's educational experience. They would feel competent enough to function as part of the educational team and self confident based on comprehension of the language, terminology, goals and intent of the IEP process.

The problem was that parents were not full participants in the IEP process causing an imbalance in power with no check and balance system in place to insure that the child's best interests were always served.

Evidence of the Problem

Over the past five years there had been an increasing trend toward parents seeking due process to resolve disputes arising over placement, classification, and program decisions. The following chart illustrates this trend:

	Number of Cases Heard in the State
1987 (to date)	82
1986	102
1985	93
1984	89
1983	67
1982	39

According to the Office of Administrative Law which hears the cases, this trend reflected a growing knowledge on

the part of the public of its' rights as well as a growing dissatisfaction with the services received by parents from their local school districts.

Of the approximately 100 members in the advocacy group serving as the practicum setting, the consensus was that parents were not full participants in the IEP process. The parent members strongly desired to be competent participants in order to effectively advocate for their children.

The group received approximately twenty calls a month requesting information about P.L.94-142 on their hotline of which about eight were requests for direct advocacy assistance. Aside from these requests, the second most frequent reason for calling was to locate qualified tutors. Generally, the monthly meetings of the group, which are informative in nature and usually feature guest speakers, were attended by between 60 to 80 members and non-members. At the end of each meeting, during the question and answer period, the majority of the questions asked revolved around the rights of the parent and the intent of P.L.94-142.

The Supervisor of Special Education for the state said publicly that parental participation in formulating education programs had been minimal (The Press, 1986). The county supervisor of special education concurred with that statement during a presentation in September 1987. He admitted that the districts had been lax about distributing the due process information as they were supposed to. He also stated that schools were not involved in educating parents about

P.L.94-142. because they were too busy educating the teachers about P.L.94-142. He asserted that a tremendous need existed for this type of inservice training for teachers.

Results of state monitoring of special education in almost every state found evidence of noncompliance with P.L.94-142 regarding parental involvement (Association for Learning Disabled Legislative Network, 1987.) The state serving as the practicum setting was one of the states cited for noncompliance in this area.

The writer's personal experience on three different child study teams, as well as her continuing experiences with the teams in her consultant position with Project Head Start and in her volunteer advocacy efforts on behalf of the group's members, served to reinforce the feelings expressed by the majority of members of the organization i.e. parents were not full participants in the IEP process. Many had no knowledge that they were supposed to be full participants and many others who had some knowledge of the law were denied those rights when they attempted to advocate for their children.

Over a period of time that began prior to the implementation of P.L.94-142, the writer had ample opportunity to observe the special education system in operation. Although many improvements were made in delivery of special services to handicapped children, one area that was not improved was that of parent involvement.

Unfortunately, the schools had not taken the initiative in assisting parents in becoming involved in the IEP process. In some districts the effort had been the opposite and districts had withheld information as well as refused to permit the parents full exercise of their rights. Generally, parents were reluctant to fight the districts due to lack of knowledge on how to go about it, lack of time, and fear of a backlash of resentment from the schools that would be focused on their child.

This had been especially true of poor, disadvantaged, and minority parents in the writer's experience, but was by no means limited to them. They were generally less aware of their rights, but the more advantaged parents who knew something about their rights, met with resistance and non compliance from the schools too, so the end result was the same. Parents who were aware of their rights as well as parents who were not cognizant of the guarantees of P.L. 94-142 were denied their rights.

In no school district that the writer had been involved with had the child study team offered educational material to the parent voluntarily. In some school districts, teams were discouraged from involving the parents to their fullest potential. In two districts where the writer had worked, administrators threatened loss of employment to teachers who tried to advocate for the parent.

Causes of the Problem

One probable cause of the problem was that schools did

not distribute written copies of due process procedure or any written material that would explain it in layman's terms. Most of the information received by the parent was received during the IEP meeting placing the parent in the position of having to learn the procedure while involved in it resulting in an unprepared, confused, sometimes traumatized parent. Thus the parent was unable to function fully as a participant in the IEP process.

Another possible cause of the problem was the parent's unwillingness to be involved. It is possible that some parents were not interested or were otherwise occupied and therefore did not become involved in the decision making process. Another possibility is that the parent was unable to attend the meetings for some reason and scheduling flexibility had not been employed to solve that problem (Lieberman, 1984).

Sometimes educators do not view the parent as an equal partner in the decision making process (NICHCY,1987), an attitude which discourages parent participation during the conference or any time thereafter. It is easily conveyed causing the parent to feel stupid, incompetent, helpless, powerless, isolated, and/or resentful (Biklen & Searl,1981). When this occurred, as parents reported it did, it caused the parent to become ineffective and was a probable cause for the problem.

Another probable cause was that the school personnel believed that an informed parent would be an assertive parent and would complicate the jobs of the teachers and

administrators. A great fear of litigation and concern for the time it takes exacerbated this concern. Due process is a traumatic procedure for the schools as well as the parent (Lieberman,1984).

Parents and teachers lacked the communication skills to be able to work together as a team (Rotter and Robinson, 1982). The language barriers between professionals and layman were an effective barrier to mutual decision making.

No local advocacy group had addressed the problem of inadequate parental involvement in special education. The only local group to begin working on solving the problem was the one selected by the writer for her practicum setting. Other advocacy groups addressed other needs of their constituents rather than the full participation of the parent in the special education process. Although education of the handicapped has been on the agenda of many advocacy groups, it often has not been the one of highest priority when problems such as shelter, employment, or discrimination exist.

Another probable cause of the problem was that parents had not received training or education about P.L.94-142 (Scanlon,1981; NICHCY, 1987; ACLD,1987; United States Senate, 1980) which can be inferred from the number of solutions which involve parent education on the subject. Parent education was the most prevalent solution found in the literature as will be demonstrated in the literature review.

Review of the Literature

There are a number of reasons why parent involvement is an important goal for all educators to promote and support, according to the literature. One of the most important rationales for making this a priority is that the research demonstrates that the children of involved parents do better in school. Whether the parent is running for the school board, attending a parent/teacher conference, or simply sitting in the audience at the school play, the child can benefit from the participation. It increases the child's perception that school is important, that the parent has confidence when dealing with school staff, and that the child is important (National Committee for Citizens in Education [NCCE], 1987).

Another reason parent involvement should be a priority is that parents want to play a role in their child's education. This fact does not differ for parents of low socioeconomic background, either, as so many educators are wont to suggest (McLaughlin & Shields, 1987; United States Congress,1980; Lowry,1983). It is due largely to the efforts of parents engaging in litigation on behalf of their children that legislation has been passed which is relevant to special and remedial education (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1982). This is strong supporting evidence of the desire of parents to be involved in education and how significant an impact they can have.

The philosophy of parent involvement in the IEP stems from the court case Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969) in which children were declared persons who do not lose their civil rights when they attend school. This principle was later cited in many judicial rulings relating to special education (Ysseldyke & Algozzine,1982) and in particular, the right to due process. In P.L.94-142, Congress relies on parent/school dialogue and joint decision making to insure full protection of the rights of each handicapped child (NICHCY,1987).

Another reason for the inclusion of the parent in the special education procedure is that parents have special knowledge and insight into their children's needs that can be shared with educators through involvement. Likewise, educators have special knowledge to share with the involved parent. Parents and educators who work together, learn together and the children benefit (NICHCY,1987; Dudley-Marling & Rosenberg, 1979).

Despite the importance of the concept and the laws which require it, parental involvement in the IEP process is sorely lacking. The Illinois State Study of the Impact of P.L.94-142 conducted in 1980 concluded that the majority of parents were not well informed or greatly involved in program planning. In an analysis of 43 states' practices in involving parents, the researchers concluded that parents have little direct involvement in monitoring the appropriateness of the education of their handicapped

children (Smith & Tawney). In another study involving 882 parents, it was found that at least 20% of the parents were not provided with information about IEPs and that 60% of those parents had many informational needs related to P.L.94-142. The parents claimed their information was devalued at conferences and they felt they were placed in an adversarial position (Sullivan, 1980).

The literature revealed that this problem is even more pronounced when the parents are minority members or poor (Rodriguez, 1981). Lowry (1983) interviewed 56 black, low income, inner city, parents of handicapped children and found that 38.9% were unfamiliar with P.L.94-142 and the majority felt helpless and imcompetent due to an incomplete knowledge of their rights to services. Boone & Smith (1981) interviewed 13 black parents and found that six had not been invited to the IEP meeting and none fully understood the forms they had signed. The Report on the Annual Conference for Parents of Navajo Children (1978) emphasized the need for increasing parents' knowledge of legislation pertaining to special education.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence comes from the testimony taken in the hearings before the ninety-sixth Congress by the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources in 1980. Parents and advocacy groups testified first followed by teachers and administrators. The parents and the handicapped themselves testified consistently that they did not feel they were desired as full partners in the IEP

process. The National Society for the Autistic stressed the need for parent and older student involvement in the placement process to avoid inappropriate placements. A primary concern of the United Cerebral Palsy Association was the IEP development, implementation, and due process. It identified nine areas of noncompliance with P.L.94-142, one of which was inadequate notion of rights on the part of parents. The International Association of Parents of the Deaf stated that parents remain uninformed of their rights under P.L.94-142. The American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Child Psychiatry presenting jointly, charged that school districts have violated the law by purposefully under-identifying or mislabeling children so they would not have to provide services and cited the lack of parent knowledge of their rights as a primary cause of this condition. The president of the American Federation of Teachers said the IEP in one state is sent home, already made out, for the parent to sign. He further stated that parent involvement in the IEP meetings was often limited to attendance and approval. A special concern of the Association for the Learning Disabled was their perception that parents do not know how to participate in the IEP process.

During these same proceedings, NCCE presented its findings from a national survey of 3800 parents in 45 states. They found that 46% were provided with no information of any kind, 30% felt the IEP fit their child,

half the districts were involved in parent education, and information on due process was not provided in 30 states. Their overall conclusions were that IEPs are being drawn up with parents present, however they are not participating as full partners.

The literature suggests that there are multiple causes for this problem. One cause cited is the lack of effective communication between parents and school representatives (Council for Exceptional Children,1983; Sullivan, 1980; Scanlon,1981). Boone & Smith (1981) mention that the educational level of poor and minority parents is an impediment to their benefiting from the type of written material offered as well as from the communication at meetings. Caster (1979) accuses professionals of using too much jargon and technical language in communication with parents.

Another cause cited in the literature is the reluctance of teachers and administrators to involve the parents fully. Many educators fear the prospect of litigation and others want to avoid the time it takes out of the regular school functioning (Lieberman,1984). Still others resent the added paperwork and the intrusion into their perceived area of expertise according to Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, in testimony given during the hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on the Handicapped in 1980 regarding the implementation of P.L.94-142. Morever

he asserted that many administrators fear that they won't be able to meet knowledgeable parents' demands, no matter how justified, due to lack of funds available. Furthermore, they feel that the law required them to perform services without providing adequate funding sources for them (United States Senate, 1980).

Lack of parent knowledge on the subject is the most frequently cited cause of the problem. This is especially true in studies where parents have been interviewed (United States Senate, 1980; Boone & Smith, 1981; Sullivan, 1980; Lowry,1983; PACER,1980; Biklen & Searl,1982; O'Dell,1978).

No research found parents to be unwilling to participate in the IEP meetings, although some research addressed the possibility that parents do not attend IEP meetings because they are not held at times or in places that are convenient for them (Lieberman,1984; Caster,1979).

Many attempts to solve the problem through the provision of education to the parent through the distribution of printed material are represented in the literature. Virtually every advocacy group has a pamphlet or booklet which explains P.L.94-142 and other related laws such as Section 504 of the National Rehabilitation Act. In addition, many researchers of the problem have offered charts, checklists, and guides as solutions (Vergasen & McAfee,1979; Kelly, 1983; Caster, 1979). Most states supply printed material for parents on the law in layman's terms.

It is not revealed in the reports of these solutions how they were disseminated and if the effect was measured. One of the difficulties with this particular problem solving approach is that it is frequently not assessed as to effectiveness.

Some educators recommended a parent training program as a solution for the problem. Smith & Tawney (1983) recommend that parents have training in P.L.94-142 with the goal of becoming more involved in the monitoring of the IEP. Tucker (1980) suggested that awareness of the parent be expanded first and then skill training workshops be instituted. The International Association of Parents of the Deaf recommended training programs for parents and suggested that funding for this could be justified through P.L.94-142 which mandates training for key support personnel. They maintain that parents are key support personnel (United States Congress, 1980).

Only two examples of research on the results of these workshops were found in the literature. Jackson (1980) developed a slide/tape presentation to present in parent workshops. She found that the workshops facilitated communication between parents and professionals and resulted in increased compliance with P.L.94-142.

The Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights [PACER] (1985) examined the immediate and longterm effect of their parent training workshop utilizing an experimental and a control group. There were 89 parents in the

experimental group and 91 in the control group, all matched along lines of sex, age, socio-economic status, and handicap of child. The experimental group participated in a three hour workshop preceded and followed by a questionnaire. The control group also completed the questionnaire. One year later, both groups again completed a questionnaire. The results showed significant gains in information for the experimental group both long term and short. Sixty percent revealed they had shared information they gained with other parents of handicapped children. Positive changes in behavior and attitude were also found. There were no changes in the control group.

Several researchers recommended that advocates be trained and hired to represent the parents. Lowrey (1983) recommends that human service personnel be trained for this purpose. Dudley-Marling & Curtis (1979) suggest the appointment of a parent advocate by the state with responsibilities for overseeing parent participation. Boone & Smith (1981) claimed the need for an advocate for poor families was especially critical due to the many barriers they face to full participation in their childrens' IEPs. Zimmerman (1981) proposes that professional organizations assume an advocacy role. The Association for the Learning Disabled publishes a training manual for volunteer advocates to study and then begin advising and assisting parents through that organization (1982).

The use of video training cassettes and films is

widespread for training teachers in the IEP process. Only one video cassette designed for parents and teachers was found (New Jersey State Department of Education,1986) and this addressed only the due process hearing. Excellent films that explain the IEP process with the teacher as the target audience exist (Maryland State Department of Education, 1986).

Another strategy suggestion for facilitating parent involvement was to enhance the parents' role in the school. Parent advisory boards to school districts are mandated in many states, but their effectiveness is limited. McLaughin and Shields (1987) believe that parent advisory boards could be highly effective if educators helped initiate their activity. This will not happen by mandating them alone; normative pressures must be exerted to gain their cooperation such as providing mini-grants, training, materials, networks, and other measures designed to change educators' attitudes about getting involved with parent/advisory boards.

Biklen and Searl (1981) suggest advisory boards and a wider range of parent groups, use of parents as teachers, and use of parents in evaluation, as methods for getting parents involved in special education. Parents expressed the desire to be involved through regular letters and school conferences (Ammer & Littleton,1983). Other researchers recommend that the parent be given a specific function on the child study team such as recording behavior frequencies,

collecting language samples, providing other data, thus giving parents a formalized role (Dudley-Marling & Rosenberg, 1979).

In summary, the problem of involving the parent in the IEP process has been recognized in the literature and many solutions to the problem have been offered. The government, educational researchers, various professional organizations and advocacy groups have addressed the problem. Few, however, have addressed the problem from a standard problem solving approach involving a plan for remediation and evaluation of the effectiveness of that plan. It might be said that the United States government is one agency that has looked at the problem in this manner and tried to solve it and evaluate the effectiveness of its attempted solutions. The solution of the federal government was to legislate parent involvement through (P.L.94-142) and it has been involved in evaluating the effectiveness of that law ever since through monitoring and hearings. The federal government's attempts at remediation of the persisting problems have been to pass more legislation in the form of ammendments to P.L.94-142 aimed at rectifying the continuing problem of parent involvement in special education.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

The goals of this practicum were: (1) to enable parents of handicapped children to participate as effective advocates in the education process and, (2) to improve the school/parent relationship.

Behavioral Outcomes

The following objectives were projected for this practicum in order to attain the above stated goals.

1.Parents will know the steps outlined in P.L.94-142 which are followed in provision of special education up to the point of due process. They will demonstrate this knowledge by means of a self check test (Appendix A) and opportunity for role playing after the presentation. 75% accuracy on the multiple choice portion of the self check test will be the criterion for this objective.

2.Parents will understand their role in the IEP process as well as their rights. Their comprehension will be measured by means of responses to the self check test presented after the presentation as well as role playing particpation. If responses to the questions pertaining to this objective are answered with 90% accuracy, the objective will be considered to have been met.

3.Parents will be able to define the most frequently used terms of P.L.94-142. Performance will be measured by responses to the self check test given after the presentation. 75% of the multiple choice definitions answered correctly will be the criterion for achievement of this objective.

4.Parents will be aware of the types of behavior which will assist them in being effective advocates and will demonstrate that awareness on the self check test administered at the conclusion of the workshop as well as in role playing opportunities. The criterion for achievement of this objective will be 90% accuracy on the questions pertaining to awareness.

5.Parents will be able to apply their knowledge of P.L.94-142 in an advocacy situation. Ten parents who participate in the workshops, will be followed through their subsequent IEP processes and their advocacy skills will be assessed by responses to another questionnaire developed by the writer and administered verbally. The criterion will be 80% of the questionnaire answered positively.

6.Parents will have increased feelings of satisfaction with their school district due to their positive experiences while participating in the IEP process. This will be ascertained through case study and interview methods. If 7 out of the 10 parents in the followup group believe they have been treated fairly by the school, have been involved in the IEP process to their satisfaction, and have not resorted to due process, this will be considered achievement of the objective.

No evaluation material was found to be completely applicable to the objectives outlined above therefore the writer designed her own, adapting material from the Association for the Learning Disabled, the National Committee for Citizens in Education, and PACERS.

The self check test was designed to be pertinent to the information given during the presentation. Questions were designed to test knowledge gained of terms, legal rights, the intent of P.L.94-142, and effective advocacy skills. The Case History Form (Appendix B) was designed to glean background information on the parents who volunteered in the followup of study. It included socioeconomic data on the parents, early development of the child, and school history of the child. The Special Education Checkup (Appendix F) was designed to assess the parents in the followup groups' knowledge of terms, legal rights, the intent of P.L.94-142, and effective advocacy skills. This instrument also asked questions about the parents' level of satisfaction with

their schools and their evaluation of the effectiveness of the slide presentation and accompanying workbooks.

In addition to these instruments, ongoing records were to be kept of the information parents provided during periodic phone interviews as to the progress of their IEP development experiences. Information such as what happened during meetings with school personnel, phone conversations, and letters written, were all to be kept in the parents' individual files. This data was to be acumulated for each parent in the followup study until the point of IEP completion was reached. At the conclusion of the parents' IEP development, the writer was to administer the Special Education Checkup via the phone.

The implementor for all objectives was to be the writer. Assisting in the implementation would be the advocacy group which would allow the writer to give her presentations at two of their meetings and to use the group's name as the sponsoring organization when contacting other organizations about the practicum.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The literature is bulging with guides, booklets, pamphlets, and all manner of printed information on parents' rights pertaining to special education. These solutions for lack of knowledge on the part of the parent are distributed by the government, both local and national, and through numerous advocacy groups. The one agency that could be most effective in distributing special education information, the school system, is not involved. Even though schools are required to distribute some materials, a national survey reported that 46% of all schools provided no information of any kind (NCCE,1980).

Another problem with the above solution is that the type of printed information provided to the parents by the schools is not appropriate for the parental educational level (Boone & Smith,1981). The law states that a full explanation of the parental rights to appeal and the process for appealing a district's action must be given in writing at the time of referral to special education. It states that the explanation must be clear and in the parent's native language, and yet a large number of schools simply distributed copies of

the due process portion of the law. Many parents had difficulty comprehending material written in legal language.

Even though the advocacy group which served as the practicum setting provided schools with material which could be more easily understood by a parent, its distribution was not required and therefore monitoring was not done. The provision of printed materials by the schools could have been an effective part of a solution to the problem, but the material must have been appropriate and the schools' participation in the solution strategy required and monitored in order to have been effective. The writer lacked the power base to implement this solution strategy.

The solution of providing advocacy assistance to parents was attempted by the advocacy group with excellent results. The problem in the implementation of this solution was the difficulty in obtaining volunteer advocates who were knowledgeable. Thus individualized advocacy consultation was applied to only a small number of parents. For the solution to have been effective, an advocate would have had to be hired to perform that function on a full time basis as suggested by several researchers (Dudley-Marling & Curtis,1979; Boone & Smith, 1981). A number of advocacy groups recommended that a parent coordinator or advocate be hired by the schools to facilitate parent involvement in the IEP (United States Congress, 1980).

The writer served as a volunteer advocate and found advocacy to have been extremely effective in helping parents

understand their rights, assisting them in making justifiable requests of the schools, and in recognizing their responsibilities in the process. The problem was that only members of the advocacy group knew of her advocacy services and of the group's hot line advocacy efforts. As a result, the number of parents assisted remained small. In addition, even if more parents knew of the service, the writer would not have been able to provide much more advocacy on an individualized basis. For such a solution to have been effective, required an advocate to have been hired by the county and that service highly publicized.

The literature does not contain a proliferation of suggestions that parents be trained to function in the IEP process, but it does repeatedly call for parent education on the topic. One advocacy group, PACERS, developed workshops to train parents and conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of those workshops. They concluded that the workshops were effective. Jackson (1980) developed a slide/tape supported workshop for parents and evaluated its effectiveness. She found it was effective for facilitating communication between teachers and parents and resulted in increased compliance with P.L.94-142. These were the only parent education training programs evaluated through research which were found in the literature. Other investigators of the problem called for parent education, but did not specify how that education was to be imparted or evaluated for efficacy.

Several researchers (McLaughlin & Shields, 1980; Biklen & Searl,1981; Dudley-Marling & Rosenberg) suggested engaging parents more actively in the school process through advisory boards, parent tutors, parent monitoring, and other methods which required policy decisions be made at administrative levels either in government or education or both. The writer could not effect such broad changes.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The best and most feasible solution for the writer to attempt was to develop a parent training module and to present it to advocacy groups and interested school districts.

Due to the wide spectrum of parents' educational backgrounds, written material alone was not considered to be comprehensible enough. A slide presentation was developed so that learning could occur utilizing a medium other than the written word. The slides were supported by workbooks for the parents to take home.

The followup phase of the practicum was the recording of case history materials from ten volunteer parents culled from the groups who attended the slide presentations. The volunteers were asked to record the dates and details of meetings, phone conversations, and other contacts with the schools. Data was gathered via phone interviews from each volunteer parent regarding his or her ongoing involvement in the IEP process. When the parents concluded their IEP participation, a questionnaire was administered to determine long range effects of the parent education workshop.

Implementation of the Solution

Preparation

The development of a slide presentation first necessitated the writing of a script. The script was written keeping in mind the varying educational backgrounds of the parents. A storyline of one parent going through the IEP process was deemed to be the most practical course for the script to follow since it required fewer actors than presenting several parents going through the process as originally planned. Unexpectedly, the use of one parent had the effect of personalizing the experience far more than had several parents been portrayed.

The writer, an total novice at creating slides, quickly resorted to a book about the subject as well as soliciting great quantities of advice from her friendly photography store staff. The hardest part of producing a slide show proved to be making the slides that contained written information. For these slides the writer had to take pictures of posters which she lettered. These particular slides were shot three times before lighting, background, and lettering were acceptable.

The narrative (Appendix C) was carefully designed to incorporate the most important information parents needed to know at the outset of their involvement with the special education system. The narration revolved around the experience of a parent going through not only the steps of IEP

development, but sharing feelings and perceptions that most parents acknowledged experiencing in the same situation.

Some of the slides needing to tell the story could be shot candidly. The writer quickly learned, though, that people were not always receptive to having candid pictures of themselves taken and soon discovered that where pictures of parents and children interacting were needed, wonderful pictures could be taken with all parties cooperating enthusiastically when the writer explained that the pictures were needed for a "school project". This method was how pictures of parents and children from different ethnic backgrounds were acquired; a component that was considered very necessary if the message of the slides was to be accepted by diverse parents.

All the pictures of the main characters were shot at different locations utilizing volunteers from the advocacy organization. The parents enjoyed playing their roles and took to "direction" from the writer with ease. The main character was actually a parent of a learning disabled boy and had been involved in IEP development for many years. A staunch supporter of the project, she made herself and her son available for picture taking on numerous occasions.

The development of a workbook which came to be called "The Parent Power Workbook" (Appendix D) was another aspect of preparation. It was designed to present the slide show information again in an expanded manner, to serve as a take home resource for the parent, to present effective advocacy behavior, and to give the parents the feel of what an IEP

conference might be like by presenting them with problems and situations that commonly occurred and having them think through or role play how they would handle those possible scenarios. Preparation of parents for more effective interaction with their child study teams was the overall goal of the workbooks which went beyond the usual dry informative papers and booklets given to parents.

The last step in preparation, which occurred simultaneously with production of the slide show, was the arranging of dates and locations for the presentations. The writer developed an introductory letter describing the project and asking if the organization was interested, a biography of herself, and a flyer (Appendix E) which could be copied and used by the organization to publicize the event. A likely list of organizations was compiled and all three of the above items were sent to them.

Of eight organizations solicited, all eight were interested. One organization was unable to accomodate the time frame necessary and one was cancelled due to lack of registration. Six workshop engagements were definite.

The Workshop Presentations

The writer presented the parent education workshops to a total of six groups including one for parents of mentally retarded children, one for parents of emotionally disturbed children, two for parents of learning disabled children in

two different counties, and two for parents of Head Start children. Parents of all economic levels were represented as well as blacks, whites, and Hispanics. (The writer arranged for an interpreter for the workshop presented in a largely Hispanic area). Attendance at the workshops sponsored by the support/advocacy groups was very good and ranged from 10 to 40 parents. Attendance at the Head Start workshops was poor and averaged about four parents.

Each presentation was followed by a vigorous question and answer session. The parents in attendance were eager to know more and many were outspoken about the fact that this information was new to them and expressed anger that it had not been advanced by the schools themselves.

A sample of eleven parents was drawn from volunteers who signed up for the followup segment of the practicum at the end of each workshop. The sample participants were chosen to reflect different economic levels, ethnicity, and handicapping conditions. The eleventh parent was included as dropout insurance so that at least ten would be in the practicum. The writer began the followup phase by sending out case history forms to be completed by each parent in the sample. It was necessary to call most of the parents and urge them to complete the forms and return them. The writer then began phoning the sample participants at different intervals throughout a five month period to follow them through their IEP development. Table I on the following page describes the sample.

TABLE I

FOLLOWUP PARENT GROUP PROFILES

Parent	Race	Ed.Level of Parent	Age of Child	Handicap of Child	Present Placement
1	W	H.S.	9	unknown	regular class
2	W	college	13	P.I.	R.R.
3	W	college	11	P.I.	R.R.
4	W	H.S.	14	deaf	special class
5	B	H.S.	4	P.H.	P.H. class
6	W	college	10	P.I.	R.R.
7	W	H.S.	12	P.I.	R.R.
8	W	college	10	unknown	regular class
9	W	college	10	M.H.	special school
10	W	med school	6	P.H.	P.H. class
11	B	H.S.	5	unknown	Head Start

W=white B=black P.I.=perceptually impaired
P.H.=preschool handicapped R.R.=resource room

Each parent was called during a prearranged week when a certain stage of IEP development or school interaction was due to be completed. Thus each parent was called on an individualized schedule. During the conversations, parents read from their own notes or simply related from memory what had transpired while the writer took notes.

When a parent concluded the IEP process, the writer administered the questionnaire over the phone to avoid delays in returns and to gain added insights into the parents' experiences.

Formative evaluation of the practicum was accomplished in two ways: (a) three administrators were asked to review the Parent Power Workbook and give their input on the entire practicum concept, and (b) responses of the parents to the presentations resulted in some changes made in the presentation narrative and format.

The three administrators interviewed were a principal of an inner city elementary school, a county superviser of child study teams, and a district superviser of special education. The principal was very supportive of the practicum intent and thought the workbook was excellent as is. He offered to have the writer present the program at his school at the beginning of the next school year. The county administrator was passively supportive; he saw nothing wrong with the practicum intent or materials but did not offer to implement it in the county or support monitoring of the provision of education in some form for parents of special education children. He said he regretted that he did not have the resources to implement this plan. The district administrator was defensive about the procedures,or lack of them, addressing parent education and felt that provision of a copy of the law was adequate. He found the workbook to be "adversarial" and, when pressed for particulars, cited only the title.

The responses of the six different audiences necessitated changes in the originally planned format of the presentation. The writer expected to pass out the workbooks, give some introductory information and an overview of the workbooks, show the slides and narrate them, conduct a question and answer session, pass out and collect the self check tests, and conclude by asking for parent volunteers for the followup study.

The first workshop was presented to the advocacy group sponsoring the practicum and was the best attended

presentation with about forty to fifty people. The turnout was larger than anticipated and the question and answer session went on much longer than expected with a number of parents becoming very emotional i.e. crying, speaking very angrily, and expressing their frustration and indignation. Parents began leaving after a lengthy discussion. The writer quickly asked for volunteers for the followup study and was beseiged by parents signing up as well as asking for more advice and information about their particular problems.

In discussing the dilemma of not having been able to administer the self check test with the president of the organization, she stated that it would not have been well received by the parents because they were too worked up emotionally, were ready to leave, and would not have liked being tested. The reason for the latter, she explained, is that many parents of learning disabled children have learning disabilities themselves and tests are traumatizing for most of them. She is a learning disabled adult herself. The writer's experience with learning disabled children and adults corroborates her statement regarding their reaction to tests. Research supports her claim that learning disabilities tend to run in families due to either hereditary factors or similar learning environments (Hallahan & Kauffman,1982) and that learning disabled individuals are generally fearful and anxious about taking tests because of past failures (Bryan, 1986; Alley & Deshler, 1979).

The second workshop was given to another group of parents of learning disabled children in another county. About 12 parents

showed up and all of them were very angry about their schools' handling of their childrens' education. After the presentation, the same kind of thing happened except this time, a leader emerged and when he got up to leave, the other parents joined him in a corner of the room and began to discuss plans for going to the Board of Education in some kind of joint effort at remedying matters. The writer was determined to get some of these parents to volunteer for the followup study and did so as quickly as possible. Once again, the mood of the parents was not amenable to taking a test. Additionally, the writer was keenly aware of the possibility that these parents might have been learning disabled and might have felt anxious about taking a test. The writer felt that the followup study would yield much more valid evaluative results so this is what she concentrated on when she realized the poor feasibility of giving a test.

The third workshop was administered to parents of retarded children. Before beginning the presentation, the president of the group had advised the writer to keep the presentation short and simple as "many of our parents are limited". This thought had not occurred to the writer prior to that night. The presentation was reduced to a minimum and only a brief question and answer session was held. The writer was convinced by the type of responses given as well as the lack of responses that the audience was indeed limited and most would not have been able to take the test with any meaningful results.

The fourth workshop was presented to parents of emotionally disturbed children. Once again, the writer had no way of knowing beforehand what the functioning level or the reaction of the parents might be. It became evident during the question and answer period with the ten parents that some were limited and some were emotionally unstable. Many were intent on discussing their children's specific behavior problems and their difficulties in dealing with those problems. The counselor who ran the group told the writer after the meeting that many did have emotional problems themselves and learning parenting skills was one of their biggest needs. It was apparent to the writer that this group had little interest in taking a test on what they had just learned. They came to talk and discuss their problems and a test was an imposition at the time. The writer felt awkward about asking this group to stop their discussion and take a test.

The Head Start presentations were the most poorly attended. By the time these workshops took place, the writer had begun to realize that the evaluation procedure of testing as applied to a parent group attending a presentation voluntarily for the purpose of gaining information for their own use, simply was not feasible. These two workshops were each attended by only three or four parents and thus evaluation of the practicum results on this basis would have been extremely limited. However, the writer secured a parent volunteer for the followup group from each of these Head Start groups.

The main problem with giving a test at the end of the workshop proved to be feasibility; it seemed inappropriate for the setting. One of the most frequent mistakes made in evaluation is that the evaluator is unaware of the feasibility of the evaluation procedure before beginning the study (Borg & Gall, 1983). Another problem felt acutely when the time came to give out the test was the problem of possible resentment by the audience which had received no prior notice that it would be tested. Further, the groups were often composed of people who could be expected to have a difficult time taking a test. Borg & Gall state that "people generally do not like being evaluated, and the evaluation process may hamper the very performance being assessed. Under certain conditions evaluations may do more harm than good," (1983, p.750). The writer was of the opinion that this danger existed and her primary goal had to be to impart the information and leave on a positive note.

The writer recognized that an aspect of the plan needed to be adjusted and an appropriate decision made. The solution to the problem was proceeding as planned and the writer had every reason to believe that the solution strategy would cause an improved state of affairs where a problem once existed. Since the self check test was one of three evaluation devices approved, the writer felt justified in continuing to implement the solution strategy. Although the objectives of short term learning of special education terms and principles was not evaluated, the overall goals of

the practicum were evaluated via a number of other objectives related to those goals.

Despite this change in the scope of the evaluation, the writer was confident that the sample group would serve to evaluate the overall goals of the practicum. The writer had no reason to believe that any of the parents in attendance at the workshops would have performed any differently than the sample group did since the sample group was selected from parent volunteers from each advocacy group involved. Additionally, age, sex, and severity of handicapping condition of the child, were taken into account and thus the sample represented a range of people who attended the workshops.

The problem of not having been able to give the self check test was viewed as one of the unpredictable deviations from the initial plan of a practicum which can not be known in advance. The difficulty of administering a post presentation test could not have been recognized until the audience at the presentation was confronted and analyzed.

When the self check test was devised, the writer had thought more in terms of a workshop as presented to teachers. Unfortunately, parental preference for education through interaction and discussion rather than by a structured workshop format, was something that had to be learned through experience.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall general goals of the practicum were to enable parents of handicapped children to participate as effective advocates in the educational process and to improve the school/parent relationship.

The results of the practicum are actually encompassed in the case studies that evolved out of many long, sometimes astonishing, often poignant, and occasionally heart wrenching conversations with the eleven parents of children with special needs who participated in the followup phase. As much pertinent data as possible was culled from the case histories to provide quantifiable data, but a great deal of individualized qualitative information was also accumulated that is relevant to the goals and outcomes of this practicum. Some of this information will be presented in the conclusions section of this chapter.

Results

It was not possible to evaluate the first four objectives, (1) parents will know the steps outlined in P.L. 94-142 which are followed in provision of special education

up to the point of due process, (2) parents will be able to define the most frequently used terms of P.L.94-142, (3) parents will understand their role in the IEP process as well as their rights, and (4) parents will be aware of the types of behavior which will assist them in being effective advocates, as originally planned. The writer had planned to evaluate these objectives through the results of a self check test administered immediately following each of the six slide presentations.

An unanticipated deviation resulted from actual contact with the parents who attended the presentations. Because of the length of the meetings and the fervency of the parents' responses and participation, the ultimate purpose of providing the education to the parents was best served by an onsite decision: Continue discussion and defer evaluation of the objectives to be obtained via the sample group. The combination of, (1)unexpected advising of the limited skills of parents at one meeting, (2)the probable aversion to testing by parents at two other meetings, (3) the extremely low turnout at the two Head Start meetings, and (4) the desire not to abruptly halt the meaningful discussion and interaction or parents at the meetings, formed the basis for relying on the sample group to evaluate practicum results. The writer is certain, however, that an awareness level of these objectives was attained by the parents at the presentations as judged by their questions, comments, and reactions to the material presented.

Objective number five, parents will be able to apply their knowledge of P.L.94-142 in an advocacy situation, was achieved by all 11 parents in the followup group. (Since none of the parents dropped out, the eleventh parent has been included in the results). This was demonstrated in the actions they took on behalf of their children as well as their responses to the special education questionnaire administered at the conclusion of their IEP developments. Six parents were able to secure services for their children that they had either not previously known they were entitled to or had not been able to secure in the past. Three parents were able to obtain evaluation services from their child study teams, 2 parents secured placement in less restrictive and more appropriate environments, 1 parent has realized a change in classification, 1 parent prevented a third grade social maturity retention, and another received a full and complete explanation (for the first time) of what was involved in her child's IEP. Of these 6 parents, 3 parents were considering due process as that was the only avenue they were aware of and 3 had no idea there was anything more they could do about their situations. These six parents were highly successful in facilitating major changes in the educational planning for their children and clearly were empowered by knowledge.

The other 5 parents in the sample were involved in standard annual reviews of IEPs. They reported enhanced roles in the process due to their newly acquired knowledge and advocacy skills. Two of these parents had severely

impaired children placed in special education schools. Their level of sophistication regarding knowledge of P.L.94-142 was far superior to any other parents in the study due to the information provided by the special school and its commitment to parent participation. There is no doubt that these 2 parents were the best prepared parents in the sample and, significantly, had the highest levels of satisfaction and trust in their schools. They had no difficulty following the steps outlined in P.L.94-142 since the schools were eager to impart this information and followed the steps themselves to the letter.

The remaining 3 parents had some doubts and concerns about whether what was being done for their child was the best the schools could do. After discussions with the writer and referral back to the Parent Power Workbook, they began to understand what the schools' responsibilities were and were not, as well as what constituted an "appropriate" education for their child. They expressed awareness of the steps they would have to take to make changes in their childrens' IEPs, however, they did not find it necessary to request major changes after they fully understood the rationale for the IEPs in place.

Over eighty percent of the responses to questions 1,2,3,6,7,8,9,10,12, and 13, were answered positively, indicating that the parents in the sample group had knowledge of P.L.94-142 as well as an understanding of advocacy skills and, consequently, applied their knowledge in an

advocacy situation.

The sixth objective, parents will have increased feelings of satisfaction with their school district due to their positive experiences while participating in the IEP process, was attained by the criterion of at least 7 out of the 10 member sample group. The parents reported that they attended conferences and interacted in the proceedings more fully than prior to the training. Many took along notes to refer to as suggested in the workbook. There was a reported increase in their self perceived value as experts in their own right with important insights and information to share with the professionals. Six of the parents admitted that in the past they had felt constrained to accept whatever the schools suggested to them because the school personnel were professionals and therefore they must know best. In the past, some of the parents had disagreed with the evaluations and decisions implemented, but they were reluctant to do so openly. As a result of the training and information, they now felt confident enough to voice differences of opinion leading to increased satisfaction with their roles in the IEP process.

The workbook lists effective communication skills including being friendly and polite, listening, communicating feelings honestly, and being assertive but not aggressive. Parents reported that they understood these strategies and used them which resulted in their increased satisfaction with their involvement in the IEP process. They were effective communicators and

reported no arguments, shouting matches, or emotional outbursts after the practicum began even though, in their case histories, evidence existed for 6 of the parents that emotional interchanges with school personnel occurred at different times. During the phone conversations with the writer the parents all expressed an understanding of what behavior would place the school on the defensive and be counter productive.

In addition to the data accumulated via parent interviews and the fact that no parent in the sample group was contemplating due process action at the conclusion of the practicum; responses to questions 5, 11, 14, and 15 indicate that the criteria for objective number six were met.

In completing the special education questionnaire,the parents knew that the writer was not affiliated with any school district and that all responses were completely confidential and reported only within the body of this report in an anonymous fashion, thus precluding the possibility of inaccurate statements by the parents due to fear of repercussions.

Although objectives one through four could not be evaluated as originally planned, it can be inferred from the results of the sample group that those objectives were achieved since achievement of objectives five and six rested on knowing the steps in the IEP process, comprehension of the most frequently used terms of P.L.94-142, an understanding of the parental role in the IEP process, and an awareness of effective advocacy behavior. Though it is unknown whether these objectives were achieved as

originally delineated, measurement via the sample group's results may be more valid in determining if these objectives were met than by use of a measure of short term learning as originally planned.

The results of the final questionnaire are presented in the following table.

TABLE II

RESULTS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CHECKUP QUESIONNAIRE

	Yes	No	NA
1.My child's classification is one I agree with.	8	1	2
2.I attended a conference during which my child's classification was mutually agreed upon.	10	1	
3.I attended a conference during which my child's IEP was developed with my input	8	2	1
4.I received a written copy or explanation of my rights.	3	8	
5.I was made to feel like a valued member of the team	7	4	
6.I have received progress reports on my child in conferences or reports.	11		
7.An annual review was completed for my child on time.	8	2	1
8.A three year re-evaluation was completed for my child on time.	3		8
9.I have either read all evaluations or had them explained to me.	10		1
10.My child received an IEP within 60 days from the time of the initial referral.	8	2	1
11.I have been treated with respect and consideration by the school	8	3	
12.I understand my child's need for special education.	10	1	
13.I understand my rights to due process.	11		
14.I do not feel intimidated about advocating for my child's educational rights due to the school's attitude.	11		
15.I believe my child is receiving a free and appropriate education at this time.	10	1	

16.Reading the Parent Power Workbook and attending the slide presentation helped me to understand the special education process

Better Much Better(11) Not Much Better

17.I believe the schools need to do more to educate parents of special education children about their rights.

Strongly (11) Mildly Disagree

Conclusions

The overall goals of the practicum, to enable parents of handicapped children to participate as effective advocates in the educational process and to improve the school/parent relationship, were achieved. The response to the workshops was positive and the growth of the parents in the followup study surpassed the writer's original expectations. The resultant changes in parents' behavior and attitudes parallel those achieved in the PACERS (1985) study of parents who received similar training. This practicum went further, however, in that it measured the changes and gains via reported actions and behavior over a four to five month period rather than reliance on a questionnaire which measured only gains in knowledge acquired.

The experiences the parents related to the writer led her to several conclusions. First, it is apparent that some school districts are in noncompliance with P.L.94-142 as they are not providing written information on parents' rights, evaluations to parents of children in private schools, evaluations when referrals are parent initiated, or legitimate parent input into IEP development. One parent reported that the IEP was filled out before the meeting, another had hers sent to her in the mail when she could not attend the only meeting date offered, and numerous parents at the workshops stated that they did not feel what they had to say was taken into account by the child study teams.

Second, some school personnel are treating parents as though they are annoying mosquitoes. They ignore their input, speak rudely to them, are inflexible about meeting times, exhibit impatience with queries, and do not tell parents the entire truth about classifications and placements. The definitions of classifications are not made clear to parents at times, and inappropriate classifications are used to gain services or avoid problem reactions. Placements are often recommended without any discussion of alternatives as is mandated in P.L.94-142. The attitude of some schools is; the less parents know, the better.

This attitude is not in keeping with the intent of the law and actually is not 'better', but worse. A parent who is frustrated and does not understand what is happening and why, is more likely to seek legal assistance than one who is knowledgeable. The parents who participated in the followup study were all able to avoid confrontations and due process once they understood their rights and responsibilities. For example, the father of a deaf girl who was able to achieve an improved classroom situation for his child, said "I knew there were things that could be done to help her get a better education, but until I attended your workshop I didn't know I was supposed to do it, I thought the child study team would do everything."

Third, the need for parent education on P.L.94-142 is glaring. The law specifies that some parent education is required on the part of the schools. The schools are doing

the minimum if they are doing anything. There is doubt as to whether they would be unbiased in the information they did dispense, if parent education were a priority. Because schools are fearful they will have to spend money on services they are not presently providing. The implication is that parent education should be a shared responsibility of the districts and an unbiased agency such as the county office of education. Until that occurs, advocacy groups will need to continue to fulfill this role.

The question of who is receptive to this type of education was raised by the administrators interviewed implying that attendance would be sparse. The workshops which addressed Head Start parents resulted in attendance by only those parents whose children clearly had special needs. The workshops presented to advocacy groups wherein every member had a child with a special need, resulted in very good attendance. The conclusion drawn is that the general public is not interested, but the parent of a child with learning difficulties is vitally interested.

Another frequently voiced reason for not providing parent education workshops is that parents of low socio-economic backgrounds will not be able to benefit from it. Marked differences in the parents' advocacy skills or comprehension of the material presented based on socio-economic strata or level of education attained by the parent were not observed by the writer. All the parents had trouble understanding certain things at first as the

subject is complex and much of it is couched in medical and legal terminology, but all parents were able to comprehend enough to be effective advocates and IEP participants.

Fourth, there is a need for heightened sensitivity on the part of the child study teams, principals, and other school personnel. A lot of misunderstanding and emotional upheaval could be avoided if the empathy for these parents was stronger. Being a parent is no easy job, but being a parent of a child who has a learning problem is certainly harder. Parents of a child who is not succeeding in school are often disappointed, puzzled, or distressed and need to be handled with extra sensitivity.

And finally, there is need for increased respect for the parents by the professionals in our society. Teachers, doctors, social workers, and other experts possess more status than parents. Armed with special credentials and jargon, they have more power than parents (Keniston, 1977). Yet there is only one way for the system to work and that is for there to be a balance of power. The professionals must acknowledge the parents' expertise (Keniston,1977) and share the decision making power. As one parent remarked to this writer after attending a child study team conference where she felt devalued "I may not know everything, but I know something!"

Recommendations

On Making Slides:

1.Find a camera store that develops film and work with them exclusively. They will give better service and more knowledgeable advice than a camera department in a large store.

2.Cultivate the relationship between yourself and someone on the camera store staff. That person's advice is worth a dozen books.

3.Ask permission to shoot pictures of people. This is the only way you can get closeups, which are generally more effective. People will usually cooperate to get the shot you want once you tell them you are working on a special project.

On Presenting the Slide Show

1.Adjust for audience size. A very small group lends itself more to a more casual intimate kind of presentation. A large group can accept a more formal presentation.

2.Adjust the length of the presentation to the audience interest level. If there are unmistakable signs of boredom, proceed to the next phase of your presentation as quickly as you can make the transition. You may lose some information, but you won't lose the audience.

3.Arrive a half hour ahead of time to make adjustments in the room and equipment which may be needed. Test the slide

projector to be sure it works properly and to get a feel for how it operates (if not your own). Furniture sometimes needs rearranging so slides can be shown.

4.People who ask questions that are of interest only to themselves or apply only to their specific situations sometimes take up too much time. Ask these people to see you after the question and answer period.

5.Do not use a post test for an informal presentation of information to parents unless they are told beforehand that this will be part of the presentation and how it will be utilized. If your primary goal is to raise consciousness and impart information, a post test does not lend itself to such a situation easily. Further, the educational background, intellect and capacity of the parents must be assessed in advance since a tenet of proper testing procedure is to be sure that the instrument is appropriate for the subjects. If that is not possible it is wise to utilize survey type instruments rather than tests.

Plans for Dissemination

The slide presentation will be shown by the advocacy group again along with a parent panel made up of parents who participated in the followup phase. They will share their successes and offer encouragement and suggestions to other parents of exceptional children.

The slide presentation will be offered to Parent Teacher Organizations in the area and to interested advocacy groups. Parent Teacher Organizations were not contacted previously.

but now that the results are clearly positive, it is expected that the schools will be more receptive to the idea than was predicted before implementation.

The writer has entered the practicum in the "Proud Projects" contest run each year by the national Association for the Learning Disabled at the suggestion of the local association's officers. Its entry in the national competition was approved by the state organization. The winning project must represent one of the major goals of the parent organization, which is, in this case, advocacy. The writer will present her slide presentation at the national convention if it wins in the category of "services to membership".

The Parent Power Workbook will be disseminated by the local tri-county advocacy groups as it has met with much favorable comment. There is a strong possibility that the workbook will be published by the state level of the advocacy group and will be disseminated throughout the state. This action is being voted upon by the state association in the near future.

Another means of dissemination will be through the writer's attempts to have the research published in an appropriate journal.

The writer plans to use the slide presentation in her courses at Glassboro State College where she will be teaching a course on preschool handicapped children and one

on curriculum development for handicapped children. It will be utilized to teach some of the basics of P.L.94-142 and to sensitize the future teachers to the parents' experience.

The writer will attempt to get on the agenda for the monthly superintendents' round table discussions and present the results of the practicum. She will try to show the administrators that knowledgeable, confident, parents involved in the IEP process and valued as partners, are advantageous to the schools and will result in less problems, additional work, and legal battles. She will offer to give the workshop in their schools for their parents of special education students.

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APPENDIX A

SELF CHECK TEST

Dear Parent,

Now that you have participated in the workshop, please try the following self check quiz. The workshop leader will go over the answers with the group and then collect the papers. You will be given information to take home which covers the same material so you can review it as needed.

1.The age range for children covered by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) is
   a.5-18
   b.5-21
   c.3-21

2.The first step in the special education process, Identification, means
   a.a child will need special education
   b.a child may need special education
   c.a child will be classified

3.A parent's signature is required before
   a.a referral can be made
   b.a child can be classified
   c.a child can be placed in special education
   d.all of the above

4.A school must give the parents copies of
   a.the IEP
   b.all evaluations, if requested
   c.their rights under the law
   d.all of the above

5.The people who decide if a child is eligible for special education services are
   a.the child study team
   b.the child study team and the parents
   c.the principal
   d.the board of education

6.Placement in the least restrictive environment means
   a.placement in the Resource Room
   b.placement in the mainstream
   c.placement in the education setting that is as close to normal as possible for the child.

7.The IEP is developed by parents and the child study team and must be reviewed
   a.annually
   b.monthly
   c.bi-annually

8.The IEP states
   a.the current educational status
   b.the classification
   c.the educational placement
   d.the goals and objectives of the educational plan
   e.the evaluation criteria and procedures
   f.all of the above

9.From the time a parent gives written consent to the referral until the time special education eligibility (classification) is determined must be no more than
  a.30 days
  b.60 days
  c.90 days
10.From the time a child is classified to the time the child's IEP is implemented must be no more than
  a.30 days
  b.60 days
  c.90 days
11.If a parent disagrees with the decisions being made at the IEP meeting they can
  a.refuse to sign the IEP
  b.do nothing about it
12.If a parent is not in agreement with the child study team they should
  a.set up another meeting with the school principal
  b.get a lawyer
  c.send their child to a private school
13.At a mediation conference
  a.the Office of Administrative Law hears the case
  b.a local judge hears the case
  c.the county supervisor of child study teams acts as an impartial mediator.
14.Related services are special kinds of help which must be provided if stated in the IEP and include
  a.counseling
  b.speech correction
  c.transportation
  d.occupational therapy or physical therapy
  e.all of the above

* * * * * * * * * * *

Mark T (true) or F (false)

As a parent I have the right
1.to be notified in writing of meetings, referrals, or changes in my child's educational program
2.to participate in making decisions about my child
3.to a free and appropriate education for my child
4.to review all my child's records
5.to have my child educated in the least restrictive environment
6.to have my child tested in his/her native language
7.to have the school pay for any legal fees I incur while trying to obtain appropriate educational services
8.to have the school pay for private education of my choosing

* * * * * * * * * * *

Good advocacy skills will help you help your child. Circle the words that describe effective advocacy skills:

listening questioning crying contributing
yelling preparing accusing defending

APPENDIX B

CASE HISTORY FORM

CASE HISTORY

Name of Child: Age:
Date of Birth: Sex:
Home Address: Home Phone:

Name and address of parent or guardian: (if same as above write same)
Father: age: phone:
Address:
Profession:
Educational Background:

Mother: age: phone:
Address:
Profession:
Educational Background:

Early Development of Child:
Birth: Premature Normal Late
Complications
Infant Development:
Activity Level: Active Passive Moderate
Health: Good Problems

Age of first sitting up Walking First Words
Sentences
Current Development:
Date of Last Physical Examination
Any serious illnesses, injuries, or hospitalizations

Vision Problems?
Hearing Problems?
Recurrent headaches, alergies, stomachaches, or other problems?

School History:
Present Grade: School:
Grades Repeated:
When was child first classified? Classification:
What was the nature of special education services received?

Did you attend an IEP conference?
Was an annual review done every year since classification?
Was a three year re-evaluation done every three years?

Were you notified in writing of the referral for the original evaluations?
Were you given copies of those evaluations?
Were you given copies of the IEPs?
Did you receive a written explanation of your rights and responsibilities under the law (P.L.94-142)?
Has your child's classification ever been changed?
To what?
Has the special education placement been changed?
To what?
Has your child received counseling, tutoring, or psychological help outside of school? Describe:

Have you felt satisfied with the school's handling of your child's special needs? If not please explain:

As part of a followup program to the workshop training you received, please record any and all contacts you have with the school (meetings, conferences, phone calls, etc.) on this sheet. Additional sheets may be added or you may use the back. Note the date and describe what transpired and how you felt about it. As a volunteer followup participant, you will be phoned by me periodically to discuss these occurrences. We will be trying to determine if your interaction with the school has been affected in any way by having participated in the original workshops. The results will be used to evaluate the parent workshop and may indicate areas that need to be changed in the workshop material or presentation.

All the information you contribute remains completely confidential and is not submitted to or shared with your school. In my use of the information, the participants' remain anonymous.

APPENDIX C

SLIDE NARRATIVE

For most parents, the experience of raising children is the most rewarding one in the world.
True, children try our patience and worry us to frazzles, but parenting is still one of the most highly paid jobs for it is reimbursed in love.
Children offer a unique opportunity for adults to give love without promise of repayment, and with total commitment. Parents everywhere tend to love their children no matter what. Too fat or too thin, pretty or homely, bright or average. It should come as no surprise that parents of children who have handicaps feel exactly the same way about their children.
When a child has trouble learning, for whatever reason, parents experience guilt, frustration, anxiety, and sadness. The child who has learning problems may need special help in order to learn.
Today PL 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, guarantees your child's right to a free and appropriate education.
As a parent of a child in need of special education, you can be your child's best advocate_____ if you know what P.L.94-142 is all about.
This law requires that several steps be taken before a child receives special education. The very first step in the process is Identification. This usually occurs when the teacher notices that the child is having a problem in school, however, the child can be identified by a parent, doctor, social worker, or other involved individual. Identification means the child may need to be evaluated for special education services.
The second step in the process is Prereferral Intervention/Referral which means the teacher and the Child Study Team first try to find ways of correcting the problem before referring for evaluations. Some strategies that may be tried are peer tutoring, reducing the amount of work, retention, giving positive attention, and others. The parent must be informed of these attempts and the reasons for them. It makes sense for parents to be aware right from the beginning that their child is having difficulty in school and what the school is trying to do about it.
Prereferral need not be done if the problem is very obviously a special education problem.
If the interventions are not helping, the teacher will make a referral to the Child Study Team. As a parent, your written consent to the referral is required. This important decision on your part will allow the team to conduct evaluations to find out more about your child's learning problems.
The third step is Evaluation. The Child Study Team must evaluate the child within 30 days of receiving written permission from the parent. Each team member evaluates the child according to their area of expertise.
The psychologist evaluates the intellectual and emotional aspects of the child.

The Learning Disabilities Consultant evaluates the child's academic functioning and learning style.
The social worker evaluates the child's social abilities and environmental factors. How the child behaves at home and in the community.
Other consultants who may be called upon to provide reports are neurologists, psychiatrists, speech therapists, audiologists, and appropriate others.
Each team member writes a report. You may read the reports and may also request copies of them.
The next step is to determine the child's eligibility for special education, in other words, does this child need special education or not? In order to be eligible a child must be classified as to what kind of problems he has.
The educational classification describes the child's learning problem according to the definitions outlined in P.L. 94-142. Some of the possible classifications are Visually Impaired, Mentally Retarded, Audiologically Impaired, Preschool Handicapped, and Emotionally Disturbed.
These terms may sound frightening or upsetting, but it is important to remember that without a classification a child is not eligible for special education.
Designing the Individualized Education Plan, commonly referred to as the IEP, is the next step. This plan describes in detail your child's program. It will be completed within 60 days of referral consent at a meeting of the parents, teacher, members of the Child Study Team, and where appropriate, the child.
Here is where your involvement is critical. Without your participation on the Team, an important expert is missing_____YOU! Remember, nobody knows your child as well as you do. You've known him or her longer than anyone else at the meeting. This is why parent involvement in the IEP is required by law.
The IEP should define your child's needs in very specific terms and then describe the services he needs to meet those special needs. It should go on to list annual learning goals and objectives as well as the methods of evaluation the school plans to use in determing if those goals are met.
During the IEP meeting, it's your responsibility to see that the IEP is written in this way and that you understand fully what it says. If you do not understand, ask questions!
During this meeting, the parent should provide information about their child that is helpful and pertinent. Who else knows your child's likes and dislikes, fears and hopes, or past experiences, as well? How does your child behave at home? All this information provides the team with additional insight into your child.
Your role during this meeting is that of child advocate. If you are nervous about this role, bring along a friend or spouse to help you. It could be the most important

role you ever play. When acting as an advocate you will be most effective if you are assertive rather than aggressive and do not assume an adversarial position.
The type of setting in which your child receives his education will be decided based on his individual educational needs. One type or program is Resource Room in which the child leaves the classroom part of the day for small group instruction
Self contained classes are full time placements in a special education class that fits your child's special needs; often located in your district.
A special school is another type of placement
A residential school may be recommended in some cases.
If the school does not have the program your child needs, they must create one or send you child to one out of the district at no cost to the parents.
The law requires that the Least Restrictive Environment be the guide in choosing a program. This means that the child's education should occur in a setting as close to normal as possible. You should make sure that your school mainstreams your child into regular classes as much as possible. For example, a child in a special class could be mainstreamed for gym or art.
The reason for this is to prepare children for life in the real world with nondisabled people. Someday, most likely, your child will be in the mainstream of society and must know how to handle it.
In addition, the self image of children with handicaps is much improved by interacting with nonhandicapped people and participating as fully in society as possible. Modern technology and changing attitudes toward the handicapped are making this more and more possible everyday.
Once the IEP is developed, your signature is required before it can be put into effect. If you do not agree, don't sign it. If you want to think about it, take it home and review it. You are entitled to a copy of the IEP.
How do you know if it is the best program for your child? You don't. But an IEP can be modified at any time so trying it out is not a problem. Also, parents can usually go by their gut feelings.....you know your child and you know what is important to you. Trust those feelings.
Once a year, the IEP will be reviewed as required by law. This will be done at a meeting called an Annual Review attended by you, a member of the Team, and your child's teacher. Your child's progress should be noted at this time as well as adjustment to the program. Changes in the IEP can be made at this point.
You don't have to wait for the Annual Review to make these requests, but can request an IEP review at any time you feel strongly concerned.
After three years, the child study team must do a complete re-evaluation. This is to provide updated information on your child.

Re-evaluations result in changes in the IEP and sometimes in declassification. You will be asked to come to this meeting and sign the updated IEP.

What happens if you do not agree with the Team's evaluations? You can have an independent evaluation done. The school will pay for this evaluation if your evaluation is used in place of the one they have provided. If they do not accept your evaluation in place of their own, they do not have to pay for it. They must consider any evaluation you have done.

What if you are not in agreement with the classification or the recommended program? Each district establishes a chain of command for resolving such disagreements. It is up to you to find out what your district's procedures are. Every effort should be made to resolve differences between parents and school staff without resorting to due process, however, the parent has the right to a due process hearing before an impartial judge if they so desire..

While parents and schools are working out their differences,an interim placement for the child should be agreed upon or the last IEP can be allowed to remain in effect if both parties agree.

P.L.94-142 has given you the right to a major role in the decisions made about your child's education. In fact, your involvement in the process is spelled out very clearly and is required by law. You can play that role most effectively if you have an understanding of what is happening and why. When you understand the intent of P.L.94-142 and the rights it guarantees, you can cooperate with the schools effectively to provide your child with the free and appropriate education he is entitled to, and Be Your Child's Best Advocate!

APPENDIX D

PARENT POWER WORKBOOK

PARENT POWER WORKBOOK

Dear Parents,

In 1975 the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L.94-142) was passed making a free and appropriate education for every child the law of the land. Prior to the passage of P.L. 94-142 many handicapped children were not served or were under-served.

P.L.94-142 was passed because parents like yourselves worked to make it happen. As a parent of a child in need of special education, you can be a powerful voice for your child's right to an education, but it is imperative that you become knowledgeable about P.L.94-142.

The law has given you many rights including the right to be involved in decisions made about your child's education as well as the right to due process. P.L.94-142 applies to all children who have handicaps between the ages of three years to twenty-one years of age.

So take some time and learn what you need to know to be your child's best advocate. This workbook is designed to help you do just that.

Happy Learning!

Bethanie Gorny

PARENTS' RIGHTS

1.The right to participate in making decisions about their child's educational program.

2.The right to be notified in writing of meetings.

3.The right to give or withhold written consent to their child's referral, classification, educational placement, or educational program.

4.The right to have their child tested in the language the child knows best.

5.The right to review all the child's records.

6.The right to an appropriate education at no cost them.

7.The right to obtain an independent evaluation if they disagree with the school's results.

8.The right to have their child educated in the Least Restrictive Environment.

9.The right to copies of any evaluations and the IEP.

10.The right to request a meeting with the principal when a dispute with the Child Study Team arises.

11.The right to request a mediation meeting with the County Superviser of Child Study Teams if disagreements cannot be resolved locally.

12.The right to due process hearing before an objective judge should mediation fail.

13.The right to recover legal fees incurred in due process if the case is decided in favor of the parents.

14.The right to reimbursement for independent evaluations if those evaluations become accepted as valid for the IEP of the child through the mediation process or due process.

15.The right to request that objectionable or inaccurate information in their child's records be removed.

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

1.To attend meetings concerning their child or let the school know if they cannot attend.

2.To share ideas and information at meetings.

3.To keep an open mind and be a good listener.

4.To treat school personnel with respect and good manners.

5.To show interest in their child's school work.

6.To make sure their child is well rested and healthy.

7.To send their child to school on time.

8.To keep school absences to a minimum.

9.To communicate with their child's teachers.

10.To make sure their child is properly prepared for school: pencils, notebooks, lunch money, etc.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Read the following questions and write your answers on this page:

Are you fulfilling your responsibilities?

Which ones are a problem for you?

How can you make some changes and fulfill your responsibilities? (Think flexibly!)

THE PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

This is what you and the evaluation team will be doing at the IEP meeting.

STEP 1 Define the Problem	Try to describe problem in behavioral terms. Exactly what is the child doing or not doing?
STEP 2 Think of all possible solutions.	Examples: behavior modification, speech therapy, special class, resource room.
STEP 3 Check to see which ones look promising	Discussion with team
STEP 4 Decide on the best one	Come to an agreement as a group.
STEP 5 Try it out	Decide who does what Implement the program
STEP 6 Check to see if the problem is solved	Evaluate. Conferences, report cards, annual review, three year reevaluation, tests

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

To be an effective advocate, you have to be sure people are listening to you. Here are some do's and don'ts:

1.Be a good listener. (Maintain eye contact, take notes or tape the meeting if you want to, sit with an attentive posture).
2.Communicate clearly and honestly how you feel or what you think. Start sentences with "I feel -------" or "I think ------" or "I don't understand ------".
3.Start off with trust and respect for the others at the meeting.
4.Be open to new ideas and changing feelings.
5.Be assertive, but not aggressive or passive.
6.Don't be defensive.
7.Don't try to tell the teachers how to teach. That's their area of expertise.
8.Don't 'bad mouth'teachers or administrators.
9.Don't dwell on past mistakes.
10.Do insist on being heard.
11.Be friendly and polite. This behavior on your part will usually be mirrored by the others in attendance.

PREPARING FOR THE IEP MEETING

1.Talk to your child about his feelings about school, subjects, classmates, and teachers.

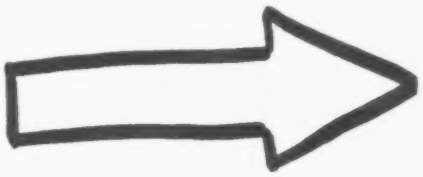
2.Keep a record of your child's behavior at home such as social interactions, home responsibilities, likes, dislikes, fears, past times.

3.Make a list of questions you want answered. Important questions to consider are:

a.What is my child's current educational status in each subject area?
b.What are her standardized test scores if any?
c.What specific problems is my child having with the regular education program?
d.What interventions have been tried?
e.What will my child realistically be able to accomplish during the school year?

4.Become familiar with the educational terms listed in the glossary in the back of this book.

Now you are ready to try out your new advocacy skills. Turn the page and give yourself some practice.



WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

(For each situation there is more than one way to handle it satisfactorily. How many alternatives can you think of? Jot them down.)

Situation #1
The IEP meeting is over and the team is asking you to sign the IEP. You are not sure you understand it or agree with it.

Situation #2
The evaluation team has decided your child is eligible for special education. After reading all the evaluations and discussing them with the team, you do not agree.

Situation #3
The evaluation team thinks your child should be classified. You do not agree with the classification, however you do agree that your child needs special education.

Situation #4
Your child has been in the resource room for two years and has made little progress.

Situation #5
Your child is doing well in the resource room, but the regular classrooms are not making accomodations for his learning handicaps.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Situation #6
Your fourth grader is classified and has received special education asistance part time for the past two years. Her grades are within the average range except for one subject. The child's regular classroom teacher has recommended retention. She feels the child is struggling and is immature. You do not believe retention will be beneficial

Situation #7
Your preschooler has delayed language skills. He has no other problems and no medical reason for the delay in language development. The Child Study Team has recommended placement in a preschool handicapped class. You do not feel this is necessary and would rather send your child to a regular preschool.

Situation #8
Your child has been recommended for placement in a special school. You think your child can be mainstreamed. The school has said it cannot provide the type of schooling your child needs within their district.

Situation #9
Your child has been recommended for resource room assistance part of the day with the rest of the day mainstreamed in the regular program. You feel your child cannot learn in the mainstream due to the severe nature of her learning difficulties and desire a special class placement. The school district does not agree with you.

Situation #10
Your child has learning and behavior problems which affect his school work. At the annual review the team recommended continued resource room assistance. You feel your child needs counseling in addition.

EDUCATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

These are the classifications listed in P.L.94-142. They vary somewhat from state to state, but are based on the ones listed here.

1. Auditorily Handicapped: an inability to hear within normal limits. The child may be further classified as either "hard of hearing" or "deaf" with deaf being a very severe loss.
2. Chronically Ill: a health condition which makes it impractical to receive instruction through the regular school program.
   a. Chronic Illness- can be tuberculosis, cardiac condition, leukemia, asthma, seizure disorders, or other medical disabilities.
   b. Eligible for home instruction- a temporary health condition where pupil is confined to home or hospital for at least two weeks.
3. Communication Handicapped: a severe speech or language disorder. Also included in this category is a subcategory called "eligible for speech correction" to designate children who have mild to moderate problems in speech or language.
4. Emotionally Disturbed: the child has seriously disordered behavior over an extended period of time which adversely affects educational performance. It can be an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships. It can be exhibiting inappropriate behavior such as depression, irrational fears, or the development of physical symptoms.
5. Mentally Retarded: the child learns at a slower rate due to a significantly lower level of intelligence.
   a. Educable- I.Q. is between 50 and 70. Adaptive behavior is moderately below age expectations.
   b. Trainable- I.Q. is between 35 and 50. Adaptive behavior is severely below age expectations.
   c. Eligible for Day Training- I.Q. is below 36. The child is unable to acquire any academic skills and may need total personal care and supervision.
6. Multiply Handicapped- the child has two or more handicapping conditions which interact in such a manner that programs designed for the separate handicapping conditions will not meet the child's educational needs.
7. Neurologically or Perceptually Impaired:
   a. Neurologically impaired- a specific impairment or dysfunction of the nervous system which adversely affects the education of the pupil.
   b. Perceptually impaired- a specific learning disability or impairment in the ability to process information for the purposes of listening, thinking, speaking, writing, reading, spelling, and/or computing. It is not the result of any other handicapping condition or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

8.Preschool Handicapped- a condition which seriously impairs a child's functioning and has a high predictability of impairing normal educational development in children aged 3-5 yrs.
9.Orthopedically Handicapped- a serious physical handicap involving bones, muscles or other body tissues.
10.Socially Maladjusted- a consistent inability to conform to behavior standards established by the school and is disruptive to the pupil's education and/or that of the other students.
11.Visually Handicapped: an inability to see within normal limits.
a.Blind-loss of vision so great that the pupil cannot rely on sight to learn.
b.Partially sighted-loss of vision which adversely affects the pupil's education.

A GLOSSARY OF MOST FREQUENTLY USED TERMS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION:

1.Adaptive Behavior- the ability to demonstrate personal independence and social responsibility according to age and sociocultural expectations.
2.Identification- someone recognizes that the child may have special learning needs and may need to evaluated.
3.Individualized Education Plan- a plan written jointly by school personnel and parents stating the rationale for placement, goals and objectives, related services,a sequential program of educational activities, and a procedure for evaluating the pupil's progress.
4.Least Restrictive Environment- a setting which is as similar as possible to the regular setting in which the pupil would be educated if not considered handicapped.
5..Referral- a written request for a child study team evaluation.
6.Related Services- Counseling for pupils, counseling and/or training for parents relative to the education of a pupil, speech correction, recreation, occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation, and any other corrective or supportive services required for a pupil to benefit from his individualized education plan.
7.Special Education- instruction designed to meet the educational needs of handicapped pupils including subject matter instruction, physical education, and vocational training.
8.Resource Room- an instructional center offering individual and small group instruction in place of regular classroom instruction. Maximum number of pupils in the room at a time cannot exceed five. Maximum number of hours a student may spend in the room per day cannot exceed two without a signed waiver from the county superintendent and the parent.
9.Special Class-a full time placement for children of like handicapping conditions. Age range not to exceed four years. Number of pupils in class limited and specified for each handicapping condition.

APPENDIX E

WORKSHOP PUBLICITY FLYER